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## GPCOG Executive Committee

### MINUTES

February 10, 2021

#### In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
Sandy Carder	Gray
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Chris Hall, and Rick Harbison	GPCOG Staff

#### Welcome

Nat Tupper, President, opened the meeting, which was held via Zoom.

#### Acceptance of 1/13/21 Minutes

Sue Witonis moved approval of the 1/13/21 meeting minutes. Sandy Carder seconded. The roll was called. Matt, Justin, and Kate abstained. The remaining members were in favor.

#### Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

#### Executive Director's Report

Chris Hall updated the committee about the meeting with the staff of Senators Susan Collins and Angus King which Nat, Sandy, and Matt also attended. The federal delegation staff heard organizational priorities, regional member voices on ongoing challenges, and staff views of how GPCOG can assist the region. Follow up items include providing information about the stimulus projects submitted to GPCOG by members and providing feedback on existing federal programs that could be improved to better serve Maine. The federal staff requested a follow up meeting in a few weeks. Sandy added that a stimulus bill provide state and federal funding is needed,

match money for federal funding is sometimes challenging, and funding for engineering and planning is essential for shovel ready projects.

Commissioner Witnois is working to set up a meeting requested by the Metro Regional Coalition to discuss the County's potential role in addressing the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Sue added that all the commissioners are engaging in conversations about this topic and intend to have a workshop style format. Kristina mentioned that the City of Portland convened a large group of stakeholders who are planning for another group of asylees arriving in Maine.

GPCOG will hire a grant manager/foundation liaison to help raise funds for regional priorities. Sue asked how this position will be funded. It will be through the administrative line item and will be a position with a limited term, to allow for testing the value of the position. Carmen asked if the grant writer will seek private funding and compete with local nonprofits. Kristina said that the position could do that, although the intention is to augment the amount of resources for the region, not to compete.

GPCOG recently received approval of a \$50,000 grant from Maine Community Foundation for broadband work and for a \$50,000 grant from the Maine Office of Tourism to promote winter dining in Maine.

### **Spotlight: Transit Tomorrow**

Rick Harbison, Senior Planner, has been managing [Transit Tomorrow](#), the long range transit plan. Rick presented the four main recommendations: make transit easier, create frequent connections, improve rapid transit, and support land use and our ability to create transit friendly places. The public comment period for the plan resulted in a lot of input. The next step is to review all the public comments. The final plan will be adopted in March. This plan is only as good as the people who champion it, therefore it needs the support from the region.

Justin reminded the group that Auburn is doing a holistic evaluation of transit routes and asked if there were any thoughts about interconnection with other COGs. Kristina mentioned that the next plan, Transit Together, will take a fresh look at the whole network in the region. Sandy appreciated how the plan included Gray, encouraging the expansion of ridership outside the downtown center. Kate added that the transit committee in South Portland is excited about the possibility of rapid transit and local circulators. She noted that zoning is driving the transit decisions and cautioned the plan to go deeply into the details to be sure to value what's already happening on the ground (like green spaces and dense population).

### **FY22 Member Dues**

GPCOG is beginning the budget process for fiscal year 2022. Because of the pandemic, FY21 offered members a 20% credit resulting in \$100,000 reduction of GPCOG member dues. Kristina asked the Executive Committee what dues credit, if any, should be offered to members this next year. In response to a question about whether staff had a recommendation, Kristina said that at the time at which the decision was made for FY21, the revenue impact was expected to

be a 20% reduction in municipal revenues. While the data isn't conclusive yet, the revenue impact seems not to be as dire as projected. Staff is also optimistic about federal aid through stimulus packages, so a 10% reduction of might be a reasonable level to provide relief.

Matt moved approval of a 10% member dues credit for FY22, and Sandy seconded. The roll was called, and all were in favor.

### **Multifamily Housing, Zoning and Transit**

Chris Hall pointed to the [Multifamily Housing and Land Use Regulation](#) report and summarized the key components of how to align ordinances and practices in order to expand housing choices and enhance transit mobility options. Jeff Levine was commissioned to look at the seven Metro Regional Coalition communities and map out the multifamily housing potential. In the report, Jeff gave a description of the communities and their likelihood of developing multifamily housing, informed by zoning, infrastructure, ordinances and other factors. Overlaid with Rick's work to identify transit centers in Transit Tomorrow, Jeff found that progress has been made in current projects, as well as opportunities to do more.

Jeff's work will be expanded to Cumberland, Saco, Biddeford, Yarmouth, Windham and Freeport, encouraging PACTS to do more transit oriented developing planning. This will move the plan into action in the context of local realities and create options that reinforce villages and support public transportation.

Carmen encouraged GPCOG to talk with Linda LaCroix, Bridton's community development director, who is developing housing options while considering essential services like wastewater infrastructure. Bridgton is a home for young professionals and should be considered in these plans. Jerre offered comments on the transit-oriented planning in terms of growth, and that Westbrook is on board. Nat wished for a deeper dive into examples, like a representative case study. Jarrod offered that in Windham, officials have enacted permit caps on growth to curb duplex development in areas that do not support smart growth.

### **Next Strategic Plan**

The major priorities of the current strategic plan are to strengthen cities and towns, lead the region to prosperity, and operate with excellence. With the pandemic, a lot has changed externally resulting in a lot of change internally. Staff has been struggling with the increased requests for services and projects. Kristina asked if GPCOG should dedicate resources to renew strategic plan sooner than summer 2022. Matt thinks it would be wise to look at an update with input from both internal and external members of GPCOG. Sandy concurred. Nat offered guidance on thinking more broadly incorporating the changes in politics and the nature of democracy. Staff will bring back a specific proposal for budget and timeline in the FY22 workplan and budget.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Agenda Items**

The Maine Clean Communities program needs the Executive Committee to individually email

their approval for a new electric vehicle lease agreement. Kate Lewis was excited that the incentive program allows for such savings for municipalities. Kristina offered a trial of this new EV to the executive committee and all councilors and elected officials who are interested. Sandy moved approval of the proposed lease agreement for the Kia Niro, and Kate seconded. Nat called roll and all were in favor.

Kristina asked the Executive Committee for agenda items for the next committee meeting. Nat reminded the Committee to provide feedback for Kristina's annual performance review.

## **Adjourn**

Jarrold moved to adjourn, and Susan seconded. All agreed.